

Dealing with Tough Moments: Assessing Faculty Preparation for Teaching Challenges

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Outline

- Introduction of presenters and session outcomes
- Brief overview of the data, survey items, and respondents
- Interactive discussion about faculty perceptions of preparation for challenging situations or conversations
- Interaction presentation of the strategies that faculty use to overcome difficult situations in their courses with encouragement for attendees to share their own
- Final discussion of how to apply findings to attendees' institutions and how they may assess similar areas at their campuses
- Q&A

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Outcomes

- Understand how prepared faculty feel to deal with situations such as student incivility, disclosure of sensitive information, or controversial events on campus as well as strategies that faculty have used to deal with such difficult situations.
- Discuss teaching-related training faculty have found useful as well as training that they wish they had received.
- Describe how these feelings of preparation differ by faculty social identity (race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) as well as employment status (disciplinary field, tenure status, academic rank, etc.)
- Comprehend how prepared faculty feel to support students facing concerns such as sexual assault, racism, mental health, or immigration status as well as how often and when they have these conversations with students.
- Discuss strategies for supporting students during these difficult conversations with ideas for resources for both the students and faculty.

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Background

- Faculty receive little to no training prior to their entrance into teaching and advising (Tulane & Beckert, 2011)
- Instead, they are trained as experts in their field (Creamer et al., 2001) despite being responsible for the formal curriculum and aspects of student learning (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001).
- Important to think about how faculty are prepared and what ongoing development they receive related to pedagogical practices (Mundy et al., 2012).

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Theoretical Background

- Socialization provides the lens for the questions posted in this study to understand how faculty are prepared to be effective teachers.
- Socialization (Tierney & Rhoades, 1993):
 - Anticipatory stage: what occurs during faculty graduate training. Introduction to roles, norms, values, and attitudes of the professoriate.
 - Organizational stage: 2 phases (initial entry and role continuance). Optimal transition happens when there is congruence between norms and values learned in the anticipatory stage and the initial entry.
- Socialization is bidirectional

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Data & Respondents

- The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) is an annual survey of faculty (and other instructional staff who teach undergraduates) perceptions and uses of teaching practices that promote student engagement at four-year colleges and universities.
 - In 2020, FSSE was administered to 13,300 faculty at 94 institutions
- In spring 2020, FSSE administered an additional, optional item set asking about teaching influences, teacher preparation, and teaching-related training.
 - This set was administered to 1,562 faculty at 16 institutions
 - The findings in this presentation come from this data

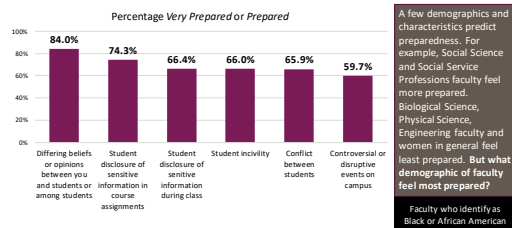
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Which situation are faculty least prepared to deal with?

- Student incivility
- Conflict between students
- Controversial or disruptive events on campus
- Student disclosure of sensitive information during class
- Student disclosure of sensitive information in course assignments
- Differing beliefs or opinions between you and students or among students

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Preparation for Difficult Situations



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Strategies for dealing with difficult situations encountered in courses

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Strategies to Deal with Difficult Situations

- Pedagogical Approaches:** Using inclusive pedagogy, beginning the course with ground rules conversation, creating safe spaces, trust and rapport building.
- Emotional Responses:** Employing empathy, showing a level of care. Using humor to deescalate a situation.
- Conflict Resolution:** Using mediation, dialogue, or listening skills. Engaging students in one-on-one conversations.
- Conduct:** Removing disruptive students from class.
- Resources:** Providing students information about resources on campus (Title IX, mental health, etc.)

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What kinds of faculty are more prepared to support students facing concerns with the following?

- Sexual assault or misconduct
- Racism or racialized experiences (harassment or discrimination based on race, etc.)
- Mental health
- Immigration status
- Disclosure of an LGBTQ+ sexual orientation
- Disclosure of a non-binary gender identity
- The upcoming presidential election

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Preparation for Challenging Topics

	More Prepared Than Average	Less Prepared Than Average
Sexual assault or misconduct	Arts & Humanities, Social Service Professions	Physical Sciences
Racism or racialized experiences	Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Social Service Professions, Black or African American	Physical Sciences, Engineering
Mental health	Social Sciences, Health Professions, Multiracial	Physical Sciences, Business
Immigration status	Social Service Professions, Asian	Older faculty, Women, White
Disclosure of an LGBTQ+ sexual orientation	Social Sciences, Social Service Professions, LGBQ+	Business, Black or African American, Straight
Disclosure of a non-binary gender identity	Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, LGBQ+	Black or African American, Straight
Upcoming presidential election	Social Sciences, Social Service Professions, Men	Physical Sciences, Engineering

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What kinds of faculty are more frequently having challenging conversation with students under the following circumstances?

- Intentionally with students in your courses
- Unintentionally with students in your courses
- With students outside of your courses in group settings (committees, student groups, etc.)
- With students outside of your courses in smaller private settings (office hours, etc.)

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Frequency of Challenging Conversations

	More Frequent	Less Frequent
Intentionally in courses	Social Sciences Hispanic or Latinx	Physical Sciences, Engineering Asian
Unintentionally in courses	Social Sciences Hispanic or Latinx, Black or African American	Engineering
Outside of course in group settings	Communications	Physical Sciences
Outside of course in private settings	Social Sciences, Hispanic or Latinx	Engineering, Asian

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Topics of Challenging Conversations with Students

Topics of Challenging Conversations

- **Social Justice:** racism, sexism, police brutality, LGBTQ+ issues, religion, politics (e.g. how politics perpetuated systems of oppression).
- **Personal:** personal disclosures about mental health, financial insecurity, LGBTQ+ identity, religion, health, etc.
- **Violence:** disclosures of experiencing violence including physical, mental, emotional health related to sexual violence/harassment.
- **Politics:** addressing leadership or political issues at the institutional, state, federal, or global levels (e.g., abortion, climate change, religion, and science).
- **Academics:** critiques of course and institutional policies as well as faculty performance.

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- How do I assess difficult situations happening in our courses and at our institutions?
- How do I assess faculty preparation and comfort with supporting students with sensitive concerns?
- Who can I partner with for support, resources, and empowerment to assess these issues?

Which of the following are most influential?

- Courses on pedagogy taken during graduate school
- Experiences as a teaching assistant or graduate student instructor
- Observing or working with a faculty member in graduate school
- A mentor at my institution
- A mentor not at my institution
- Colleagues or peers
- Institution-level programming
- Department-level programming
- Teaching-related books, articles, etc.
- Conferences or professional associations

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Influences on Teaching

How much has each of the following influenced your teaching?

Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little, Not at all

Substantial: % *Very much* or *Quite a bit*

Graduate school experiences

- 44% Pedagogy courses
- 51% Teaching assistantship
- 55% Observing faculty

Internal sources

- 42% Mentor at institution
- 60% Colleague or peer
- 31% Institution-level programming
- 28% Department-level programming

External sources

- 41% Mentor outside institution
- 50% Teaching-related books, articles, etc.
- 52% Conferences, professional associations

Influences on Teaching

	More often influenced	Less often influenced
Graduate school experiences (courses, assistantships, observations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts & Humanities • Assistant Professors, tenure track • nonbinary gender identity, Asian, LGBTQ+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Full Professors • White
Internal sources (mentor, colleague, institution- or department-level programming)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Professions • full-time Lecturer or Instructor, not on tenure track, 4 years or less teaching experience • Asian, Black or African American 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Professors, Tenured, 30 years or more teaching experience
External sources (external mentor, teaching-related sources, conferences or associations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education 	

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Examples of teaching-related training that faculty found to be useful

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Useful Training

- Attending professional conferences "played a major role" in learning and practicing new teaching skills.
- "I never had a teaching related training. I was 'taught' by my undergrad professor."
- "No one ever taught me how to teach. It has been trial and error, being adaptable, and supported to be able to try new things."

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Examples of teaching-related training that faculty wished they had

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Desired Training

- "I'm completing this in the midst of the shift to virtual teaching due to the coronavirus pandemic."
- "More on understanding how racial differences between instructor and student may create challenges or barriers to learning, trust, and motivation level."
- "How to be proactive about avoiding problems, rather than reacting to them."

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1. What would be your assessment strategies and outcomes for improving faculty preparation for difficult teaching situations?
 2. How do I know my strategies are successful?
 3. How can I get people on board? What stakeholders should I collaborate with?
 4. How can I partner with graduate education and faculty development?

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Thanks for joining us!
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